

HER CHRISTMAS GIFT

It Was a Nice Little Fluffy Bundle, Full of Life, Kicking and Squirming.

By CLARA DEANE.

Christmas was coming by leaps and bounds. It was coming in a way to strike panic to the hearts of people who never began to think of it till after Thanksgiving, and all over the country they were hastening to make embroideries and fancy work and calendars.

"I do hope," said Mrs. Martha Iverson to her husband, "that Fred and Nellie will send mother a Christmas present this year. I just can't forgive them if they don't."

"O, well, they will," said her husband.

"They didn't last year; don't you remember? Mother told me all about her presents, every little thing, and who it was from, but not a word about them. At last I just asked her. 'O, I didn't get anything from them,' she said, 'but you know they are just beginning housekeeping, and their expenses are so heavy in the city.' Huh! when I know that Fred gets as good a salary as you do, and their apartment costs them only thirty-five dollars a month partly furnished. And there's another thing, John, no one in the family has ever said one word to Fred about going off out west and never writing home one word for five years and nearly breaking mother's heart. He's never had one word of reproach." Mrs. Martha paused.

"Don't you think it would be all right if I should write to him and make him realize once how happy he's made us all?"

"Well, my dear, it doesn't seem to me that this is the psychological moment. Fred tore away from us all years ago; I don't know just what was the matter, but I know he was discouraged and sore at heart and made up his mind that father had no use for him. Now he is married and doing well, and at last he has written home, or she has—good little thing—and mother is happier than she has been for years. No, I wouldn't write that letter to Fred just now."

"Well, perhaps not, John, you're so forgiving. But I do hope they won't forget mother this year."

"Mother," her heart traveling its faithful rounds among the absent ones, hoped so, too. Christmas was always a time of stress and strain with her. With the old-fashioned feeling of economy strong upon her, and not much money of her very own for spending, she did her best with her little hand-made gifts and sent them out with a depressing feeling of their inadequacy. Her greatest trouble had always been that other people gave her more than she was able to give them. But this year her Christmas rose had a distinctly new thorn. She couldn't, simply couldn't, have Mrs. Martha look over the presents of another Christmas and see nothing from Fred and Nellie. And she was so afraid there would be nothing. She believed she would drop a hint in her next letter to Fred. "How nice it would be if you could come home for Christmas. But I suppose that is quite impossible, as the distance and expense are so great. We shall think of you. We put our presents on the breakfast table in the same old way, and you know father is getting a little old, and I think he would be very much pleased if there was a little remembrance from you."

She discarded this. Fred would certainly remember that father, good man as he was and fairly willing to pay all the bills, never bothered about Christmas, neither making presents nor caring whether he received any. And she could not write any more plainly. Perhaps he showed all his letters to his wife. That was the penalty a mother paid for a man's being happily married. She made up

her mind to wait till the last hour of the day before Christmas, and then if nothing had come to slip quietly down town and buy something that they would be likely to send.

"Father," she said that night, rejoicing in the new happiness of being able to talk about the boy whose name had laid so long like a guilty secret between them, "we haven't heard from Fred and Nellie for a couple of weeks, and she's been so good about writing. The last time she said she wasn't feeling so very well. I thought perhaps—I just thought of it—hadn't we better send them a Christmas gift?"

"Why, yes, mother, you get and send something."

"You, too, father."

"I wouldn't know what to get. They've probably got everything they need. Young people do somehow. And I wouldn't know what they want. Better send them a check and let them buy what they please."

"O, father!" she beamed at him, and the grace that is God's gift to mothers kept her from saying, "you owe it to him—you owe it to him; he's your boy, you know he's never had what the other boys have had." Instead she began talking about Nellie.

"Fred's little girl wife! I know she's just dear, father, and do you know, I think it is because her own people are all dead that she was so anxious to know us. I think it was sweet of her to write that first letter. It takes women to hold families together."

The days raced by like telegraph poles past a car window. The postman came and went, leaving packages, but none from the far west. She never wavered in her intention of buying a gift if none came. At first it seemed dreadful to sully the pure white Christmas time with a lie. Her New England conscience never let her call it anything else. But the remembrance of Martha's crucial questions nerved her. She didn't care for herself, but she wasn't going to have Fred and Nellie weighed in the family balance and found wanting.

Mindful of the warning of the consumers' league, she did her Christmas shopping early. So, apparently, did everyone else. The crush bewildered her. Everybody was buying madly. Everybody seemed so rich.

Late in the afternoon of the day before Christmas after the last mail delivery, she went down to buy the present that had not come. Her one little gift from Nellie had been a faintly embroidered towel sent in the middle of the year, just because she wanted to.

She stood at the counter, hard to please. Everything was so overdone. She thought she would buy a scarf for the dresser in Fred's room, the room they would have when they came home. How could the weary saleswoman know that she was trying to find something that looked as if Nellie had done it? She had one narrow escape. While she was waiting for her package Martha came by.

"Well, for two women who did their Christmas shopping early!" said Martha. "But of course there's always some last thing that one forgets. I'd forgotten to get anything for Elleen Atkins' baby. And John its godfather. She would never have forgiven me. That's what brought me down."

Mother was less communicative. She merely said she was sorry she had had to come down, and how was Elleen's baby, and would John and Martha be sure and come to breakfast on time in the morning; 8 o'clock seemed late to father. And then she hurried home guiltily through the early dark with her secret.

"I saw mother downtown tonight, John, at Untermyer's. She looked tired and worried. I wish she would let me do things for her. And I've made up my mind to one thing; if there's nothing from Fred and Nellie, I'm not going to say one word about it. Neither do you."

Late that night mother put the assembled gifts at each plate and chair.

Luckily she had Nellie's card, undated, and she laid it in plain sight on the dresser scarf. It might save questions.

The surprise of opening packages was over, and the pleasure of showing them to each other had begun, when the doorbell rang. She looked around the table. They were all there. And then in a minute Fred was in the room with a queer little bundle in his arms which he pressed into hers—a little bundle that stirred and woke, and set her trembling with more happiness than could well be borne, even on Christmas morning. And father was kissing a little woman whose wistful face was a little thinner than in her picture, and a bit travel worn, and in another minute her new daughter was in her arms.

"You see," Fred was saying, "we just thought we'd surprise you, and it has taken everything we could scrape up to make the trip. That's why we didn't—" Something in his mother's face stopped him. But nothing could stop the little woman.

"O, yes, that was why. You see, I made all the baby's things myself, and I had no time or strength left to work at Christmas gifts."

"But there is something from you, Nellie, with your card," Fred had made the round of the table and he and Martha met above the accusing card. The little woman looked puzzled.

"But I didn't—" she began.

Mother rose to the occasion. "Yes, dear. But it was the only thing I could do to make it seem as though you were all here."

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His System.

A gentleman who was a stranger to the usual throng stepped up to the mahogany, ordered a New Orleans fizz, and, reaching in his pocket, pulled forth a live toad and placed it on the bar.

"For the love of Mike," yelled the man next to him, "Why the toad?"

"That toad plays a star part in a system that I have used for many years with great success," replied the gentleman.

"Spring it," shouted the mob.

"Well, you see, I take my little friend toad and place him on the mahogany in front of me and order my drink. I take my drink and then I order another, and sometimes another, and perhaps then another. I look at my toad, and if there is only one toad there I stay and enjoy a few more rounds. As soon as there are two toads there instead of one I go home. I have never yet stayed until there were three. That's my system. Well, I don't mind if I do. A little more of the same, please."—Philadelphia Record.

Concise Epistles.

Talleyrand could write a short letter. When a woman wrote to inform him of the death of her husband, he simply replied: "Chere Marquise, helas." And among official dispatches there is that of Sir George Walton, who, after an engagement with the Spanish fleet, wrote: "Sir: I have taken or destroyed all the Spanish ships as per margin. Yours, etc." And a later instance was the complaint of Cecil Rhodes that Dr. Jim had upset the apple cart.

Always Fatal.

"You seem to have a healthy climate here," said the easterner, who had stopped off at Naked Dog, Ariz.

"We ain't had but five deaths in five years," replied the native, "and they was all cause by the same trouble."

"What was it?" asked the easterner.

"Five aces," replied the native.

Bowling Alley for Church.

A parish house equipped with a dance hall, a bowling alley and a moving picture theater is to be erected for the First Presbyterian church of Newark, N. J., if the recommendation of the pastor, Rev. William Dawson, is adopted.

RECIPES IN MIXTURES

SOMETHING HERE TO SUIT ALL VARIETIES OF TASTE.

Marshmallow May Always Be Employed When a Sweet Confection Is Desired—Some Advice as to Its Use.

Dressing.—Warm about half a gallon of simple sirup and beat in one 25-cent package of marshmallows. This can be made into many styles, using chopped nuts and fresh fruits to mix in the dressing.

Dressing No. 2.—Put the contents of 10-cent package of marshmallows in a double boiler and let dissolve over a moderate fire. Take half pint of granulated sugar and three tablespoons of boiling water, cook until it threads from the spoon, beat slowly into the white of two eggs, then add the marshmallows while the frosting is hot.

Frosting.—Boil three-quarters of a cup of granulated sugar and one-fourth of a cup of milk without stirring for six minutes or until the sirup threads. Cook and stir one 10-cent package of marshmallows and two tablespoons of water until smooth. Put the two mixtures together and beat until thick enough to spread, after flavoring to state.

Dessert.—Lay slices of angel food cake on small plate. Spread over these a mixture made of one 25-cent package of marshmallows, put into a little and set over a slow fire to melt. Whip cream, to which add vanilla to suit taste. Spread this on marshmallows and then another layer of cake and marshmallows and finish with cream. Set aside for one hour before serving.

Lemon Dessert.—Dissolve one package lemon flavor gelatine in one pint of boiling water. Just as it begins to stiffen drop contents of one 10-cent package of marshmallows into the gelatine. Pour into a mold and when firm decorate with marshmallows and serve with whipped cream.

Combination Dessert.—Take one ten-cent package, one cup of pineapple, half a cup of walnuts (chopped), one cup cream (whipped). Mix pineapple, walnuts and marshmallows together and add whipped cream.

Orange Dessert.—Cut contents of 10-cent package of marshmallows in quarters with scissors. Soak in juice three oranges two hours, then add whipped cream at top.

Delight.—Cut up one 25-cent package of marshmallows. Whip half a pint of cream, chop one cup English walnut meats, or put in candied cherries. Flavor with rum. Mix marshmallows and nuts or the cherries. Pour over them beaten cream. Serve in sherbet glasses.

Coffee Pie.

One and one-half cups cold coffee, one-half cup of milk, yolks three eggs, 2 tablespoons cornstarch, four tablespoons sugar and one tablespoon lemon juice. Cook until it thickens in double boiler and pour in freshly baked crusts. Beat the whites of eggs with two tablespoons sugar, flavor, spread over top and brown in oven.

Cleaning Copper.

Although vinegar may be used to clean the outside of copper cooking utensils, care should be taken to avoid letting any fall on the tin lining of the pan. To clean the pan inside and out, by far the best method is to scrub it with soda, hot water and soap. The outside may then be polished with a rag dipped in vinegar.

Yorkshire Pudding.

Yolks of three eggs, whites of two: beat well together; add one pint of milk and one tablespoonful of flour. Beat well. Let stand 15 minutes and pour in flat baking pan or deep plate. Bake in very hot oven about 20 minutes. Cut in large dice and serve around platter with roast beef.